

1. Start a compost heap. Lyn Ross at the Greater Vancouver Regional District says backyard composters are a great way to worm your way into a greener lifestyle. People in condos can compost using a composter with worms that can sit on the kitchen counter. "It's a plastic box with a lid, and the worms digest the compostable materials in your kitchen," says Ross. Composters can be bought at City Farmer in Vancouver, or through most municipalities.

2. Slow down when driving. Driving at 80 km/h uses a quarter less gas than doing 112 km/h.

3. Turn down your heating a few degrees. Elisha Moreno of B.C. Hydro says people should install a programmable thermostat, which is cheaper than replacing a heating system. "A lot of people will forget to turn their thermostat down when they're not at home, or they're sleeping," says Moreno. Thermostats range from \$30-80, and are set between 20 and 21 C. Every degree above that increases heating costs by one or two per cent. Moreno suggests turning the setting down to 16 C when there's nobody home, or at night.

4. Take a brisk shower, not a bath. Showers use more hot water in the home than anything else. Use a low-flow shower head, that uses 60 per cent less hot water, and can save up to \$200 per year. They can easily be installed, and cost about \$30.

5. Buy some Tupperware. Hold a tupperware party. Think of how many sandwich bags they'll keep out of the landfill.

6. Buy energy-efficient appliances. There are Energiguide stickers on all appliances telling how much energy they use. When shopping for a new appliance, look for the Energy Star logo, says Randi Kruse of the David Suzuki Foundation. It can cut 30-40 per cent of household energy use. The fridge is the best appliance to replace, because it's running all the time. Says Kruse: "That will make the biggest difference in energy savings. In the long run, you'll save money as well as energy."

The additional cost is recouped usually within a couple of years through energy savings. "When you're buying an appliance, the cost of the energy used to run it must be factored in," says Kruse.

7. Use compact fluorescent lights. CFLs last about eight times as long as incandescent bulbs, use 66 per cent less electricity, and only need to be replaced every five or six years. According to B.C. Hydro's Elisha Moreno, they should be placed in spots where the bulb is used a lot, such as a hallway, outdoor light or family room. Replacing a 100-watt incandescent bulb with a 25-watt CFL saves \$30 in electricity over the life of each bulb.

8. Cycle, don't drive. The number of bike lanes is increasing all over the Lower Mainland, and more than ever, cyclists are on the move. In Vancouver, only three per cent of all trips are made by bicycle, but that number has almost tripled to over 50,000 trips a day. Dr. Colin Campbell, of the B.C. chapter of Sierra Club of Canada, says 40 per cent of greenhouse gases come from cars: "By cycling, we're really hitting it where it's important."

9. Use low-phosphate dishwashing liquid and detergent. Due to B.C.'s soft water, you need only use half the detergent recommended. You save by using less, and still get the whites done right.

10. Buy local. Just think of the pollution from freighters and cargo planes delivering you those Chilean raspberries in January. Randy Kruse of the David Suzuki Foundation says the average B.C. meal has travelled 2,400 kilometres from field to table, the driving distance from Winnipeg to Vancouver. "It's really easy to find local produce, because there are stickers telling you," says Kruse. "Or you can simply ask." Being an eco-conscious consumer when you're shopping for food is an excellent way to reduce your carbon footprint.

11. Grow an organic vegetable garden. Tony Maniezzo, the horticulturalist in charge of the food garden at the UBC Botanical Garden, says this is the perfect time to start an organic garden. "The most important thing is you've got to have some place that's in full sun to grow vegetables," he says. Raised beds are best, as the soil warms up faster in spring, which means you can get started sooner. Maniezzo also advises to grow a wide variety of vegetables, and plant with garlic and onions, which repel insects. Oriental vegetables can start in March. Look at the market gardens and see what they're planting. Vegetables that Maniezzo says plant well in our damper, cooler climate include mustard greens, spinach, peas, mixed lettuce greens, arugula, chives and scallions. "It gets you outside in the fresh air. Digging and hoeing is beneficial to your body," he says. "The taste of fresh-grown vegetables is far better than what's coming from the supermarket. It's good for your body and spirit."

12. Carpool. To sign up for a car-share program, check out the Jack Bell Rideshare program at <http://online.ride-share.com/en/my/>

13. Cook in bulk, and cook for friends.

14. Holiday in B.C. "(Holidaying) overseas is going to become very special," says Colin Campbell of the Sierra Club. "Take fewer, but longer, overseas holidays. Go to Europe once every five years, but do it for six weeks."

15. Ditch the plastic bags and get cloth bags instead. Or at least recycle white plastic shopping bags at most supermarket chains. Brock Macdonald of the Recycling Council of B.C. says plastic bag re-use is always the way to go. "We wouldn't need to use plastic garbage can liners if we diverted our organics, like kitchen waste, to composting," says Macdonald. Some Lower Mainland municipalities are looking at the idea of a 25-cent 'PlasTax' levy on new plastic bags. Cloth bags come in all shapes and sizes, and cost a few bucks each.

16. Drink tap or filtered water, and use less bottled water. According to the GVRD, 1,000 litres of tap-water would cost you 50 cents. To buy 1,000 litres of bottled water, it would cost 3,000 times more, or \$1,500. Tap water is regulated by the B.C. Drinking Water Protection Act, but there are no legislated rules for bottled water, says the GVRD.

